



# MEASURING DIVERGENCE: THE CONCORDANCE FACTOR FOR WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE DECISIONS

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## ABSTRACT

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972) is an important international instrument for protecting cultural and natural heritage, with far-reaching diplomatic, economic and academic implications. However, increasing criticism has been directed at the decision-making processes of the World Heritage Committee, particularly its growing tendency to disregard the recommendations of its Advisory Bodies. Until now, such criticisms have largely been anecdotal, based on undocumented observations and lacking quantitative evidence. This paper addresses this gap by proposing a quantitative methodology to measure trends in the level of concordance between Advisory Body recommendations and World Heritage Committee decisions. The study introduces metrics such as step values, step increases and the Concordance Factor to assess the degree of concordance between Advisory Body recommendations and World Heritage Committee decisions between 2005 and 2024. The findings reveal a consistent decline in alignment, with the Concordance Factor averaging in the 60% range in the mid-2000s to a 25% range for more recent committee decisions. This reflects the World Heritage Committee's increasing tendency of inscribing despite Advisory Body recommendations for deferral, referral or even non-inscription. Such decisions undermine the credibility of the World Heritage system, risking the dilution of Outstanding Universal Value, inadequate site protections and long-term management challenges.

**Keywords:** credibility, politicisation, rigour, expert advice, scientific evaluation

## INTRODUCTION

### World Heritage Convention and its Advisory Bodies

On 16 November 1972, UNESCO adopted the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (hereafter referred to as the Convention). It came into operation in 1975, upon reaching the threshold of 20 ratifications. This Convention, popularly known as the World Heritage (WH) Convention, provides a mechanism to identify the world's outstanding cultural and natural heritage properties and emphasises the need for their protection and management. The Convention provides for the establishment of the World Heritage List – a list of sites that have been adjudged to have met at least one out

of ten selection criteria, conditions of integrity and/or authenticity, and adequate protection and management specified in the Convention's Operational Guidelines (see Cameron & Rössler, 2013, chap. 2).

The World Heritage Committee deliberates on the inscription of new World Heritage sites every year. Inscription is the outcome of two different phases – nomination and selection – and of the interacting input of three different actors – States Parties, Advisory Bodies (ABs) and the World Heritage Committee (Strasser, 2002). States Parties submit nominations following guidelines prepared by the Committee. These nominations are then evaluated by technical ABs: ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) and ICCROM (International Centre for the



Adoption of the World Heritage Convention in 1972 at UNESCO © UNESCO

Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) for cultural heritage nominations, and IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) for natural heritage nominations (Convention, 1972, article 8, paragraph 3). All three ABs are comprised of international experts on heritage studies, and their role is to advise on the implementation of the Convention in their field of expertise, including assistance in the development and implementation of the Global Strategy, Training Strategy and Periodic Reporting. ICOMOS and IUCN are responsible for the evaluation process, appointing qualified experts to evaluate properties and presenting the reports to the Committee as a basis for decision (UNESCO, 2024, articles 30–37). While ICCROM does not evaluate heritage sites for UNESCO, it rather focuses more on capacity building and technical assistance.

During the WH Committee’s annual meetings, experts from ICOMOS and IUCN present technical evaluations of nominations dossiers proposed by States Parties. The Committee, composed of 21 member states elected for four-year terms, reviews these recommendations and makes the final decisions on inscriptions. Typically, for every WH Committee meeting, there are between 20 and 45 nominations to consider. For each nomination, and prior to the WH Committee meeting, the ABs carry out an extensive technical review through a rigorous evaluation process in an effort to establish whether or not the proposed WH site has what is known as ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ (OUV), the test a nomination must pass to be recommended for inscription. Based on Operational

Guidelines (UNESCO, 2024, article 49), ‘Outstanding Universal Value means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity.’ The review process for each AB comprises an in-depth on-site inspection which typically includes consultations with local stakeholders, and local and national authorities. The process involves the gathering of advice and opinions of regional or thematic experts, discussions with officials and experts from the nominating country, a bibliographic review, and the convening of a panel of experts which deliberates over the evidence collected.

Several weeks prior to the WH Committee meeting, the ABs publish the results of their technical evaluations. These results are distributed to WH Committee members for their consideration, so that their decisions during the WH Committee meeting may be well informed.

The ABs have four options when recommending a course of action to the WH Committee:

1. **Inscription:** The ABs have concluded that the nominated property has OUV. This implies that the ABs consider that one or more of the inscription criteria is/are fully met, and that the property meets the conditions of authenticity and integrity (cultural properties) or of integrity (natural properties), and that it is effectively protected and managed.
2. **Referral:** The ABs have determined that the OUV has been demonstrated, but that these nominations have minor issues that can be addressed within



Advisory Bodies present findings to the World Heritage Committee © UNESCO

the 3-year timespan of a referral. Under these circumstances, the State Party may re-submit the same nominations, but with the improvements required. The re-evaluation of a referred property undergoes a similarly rigorous evaluation process and makes a recommendation in relation to inscription but without a further field mission to determine if the weaknesses identified have been corrected.

3. **Deferral:** The ABs have concluded that there is a lack of adequate justification of the OUV and/or the management regime for the proposed site is inadequate. The lack of evidence of OUV may be due to a weak comparative analysis which fails to make the case that a particular site is truly the most outstanding of its kind. It may also be due to poor or unclear argumentation for inscription under specific criteria, or other such fundamental weaknesses in the nomination or the management regime. The ABs consider that a significant restructuring of the nomination is required to address these issues. When a deferred nomination is revised and re-submitted, given that the changes are considered to be so important, it must be subjected to a new formal evaluation process by the ABs, including a new site inspection, background literature review, and expert panel deliberation. As this process is time consuming, the deferred nomination cannot be re-examined by the WH Committee until at least two years have elapsed after the original nomination but may be much longer.

4. **Non-inscription:** The ABs have determined that the nominated property has not been proven to have OUV which implies that one or more of the three pillars of OUV – criteria, integrity and authenticity, protection and management – cannot be met. As a result, no further re-nomination effort is warranted.

At the WH Committee meeting, ABs present each nomination one at a time, and explain the reasoning behind its recommendation to the WH Committee. The debate is then opened to the WH Committee members, who may ask for clarifications from the ABs, make statements of opinion, or even request clarifications from the State Party whose nomination is being considered. Typically, after up to an hour or more of deliberation, a decision is made, most often by consensus. In controversial cases the deliberation process can last much longer.

#### **Implications of rejecting ABs' recommendations on nominations**

The WH Convention is regarded as one of the most effective international legal instruments for protecting cultural and natural heritage (Strasser, 2002; Titchen, 1996). Decisions made by the WH Committee on the site inscriptions carry significant diplomatic, academic and economic implications (VanBlarcom & Kayahan, 2011).

In the early days of the Convention, there was a very high level of acceptance by the WH Committee of the ABs' recommendations but this has changed over time.

There is growing criticism directed at the decision-making process for World Heritage site inscriptions and its credibility (Cameron, 2013; Cleere, 2011; Jokilehto, 2011; Meskell, 2013; Pressouyre, 1996; von Droste, 2011). Concern has been expressed by observers, WH Centre staff, States Parties to the Convention and WH Committee members that the decision-making process for inscriptions may be increasingly disregarding the expert advice and evidence provided by the ABs, and that the WH Committee may have a growing tendency to reject the recommendation of the ABs in a desire to provide more favourable outcomes. This is manifested by decisions to:

1. Inscribe sites that are recommended for ‘referral’ or even ‘deferral’ (or in rare cases ‘non-inscription’), or
2. Refer sites that are recommended for ‘deferral’ or ‘non-inscription’, or
3. Defer sites recommended for ‘non-inscription’.

For instance, some scholars pointed to the 34th Committee Session in Brasilia, 2010 as a turning point for this divergence (Brumann, 2022). The ABs recommended 14 sites out of 37 for inscription, which is 39% of the submitted nominations. However, the WH Committee ultimately inscribed 23 nominations, constituting 64% of the submitted cases (UNESCO, 34COM, 2010, Decisions). These decisions were made without adhering to the Committee’s established rules, which require a formal process for reconsideration of ABs’ recommendations. If the Committee disagrees with an ABs’ evaluation, it should seek clarification or additional justification from the ABs rather than bypassing the established evaluation process. Brumann (2022) further points out that by 2015, overruling experts’ advice in the session and swapping pre-negotiated support for this purpose have become common practice from which only a minority of Committee members refrain.

Though there is, no doubt, a general desire to have new sites inscribed in the most expedient manner, disregarding recommendations of the ABs has important repercussions. The WH Committee inscribing sites that, in the opinion of the ABs, do not exhibit OUV risks de-valuing the WH brand. Sites may also be inscribed despite an absence of clear boundaries or buffer zones, or without sufficient legal protections. In such cases, there is a greater risk of thorny and protracted management challenges arising over the years.

These problems may end up consuming a disproportionate amount of the increasingly limited resources available to the ABs, the WH Centre and the WH Committee. Such sites are more likely to be the source of complex issues that may not have arisen had the WH Committee waited until a technically robust

nomination had been presented before making its decision on listing. For example, IUCN’s WH Outlook data indicate that sites inscribed against IUCN’s recommendations tend to have a disproportionately worse outlook than others (WWF, 2019).

Furthermore, there is also an impact on the people who have championed technically rigorous nomination proposals – having invested years of concerted effort on behalf of local and national stakeholders. When their nominations recommended for inscription are inscribed alongside other nominations recommended for deferral or referral, there is an understandable sentiment of double standards that undermines the well-deserved sense of accomplishment and prestige that should be felt by all those involved in preparing a strong nomination. Overall, decisions that do not consider ABs’ nomination recommendations risk weakening the highly regarded WH brand.

Until now, the concern over an increasing disregard by the WH Committee for ABs’ recommendations has been predominantly anecdotal, based on undocumented observations and unsupported by any quantitative published evidence. While some quantitative studies exist (see Meskell et al., 2014), they remain limited in number, and the methodology used to determine the concordance factor has not been demonstrated. This paper proposes an objective and quantitative methodology to measure the trends in the level of concordance between the ABs’ recommendations regarding inscriptions of new WH sites, and the decisions taken by the WH Committee so that the anecdotal evidence can be either confirmed or refuted.

This paper only focuses on decisions regarding the inscription of nominations or re-nominations.<sup>1</sup> Minor or major modifications are not considered, for instance, a minor issue regarding boundary, naming or area clarifications. In addition, decisions for which the ABs’ recommendation was ‘inscription’ were not considered, as it is assumed in such circumstances that there is effectively no possibility for disagreement by the Committee.<sup>2</sup>

1 A State Party may submit a renomination of a property to alter the criteria under which it is to be recognised, or to propose a major boundary modification.

2. There are very rare cases where the WH Committee decided to refer a nomination recommended for inscription by an AB due to delicate political reasons such as international boundary issues or at the request of the State Party. For instance, in 2001, in the 25th session of the WH Committee, ‘The Bolgar Historical and Architectural Complex’ recommended for inscription by ICOMOS was later deferred by the WH Committee. See <https://whc.unesco.org/document/1228> and <https://whc.unesco.org/document/1269>. These cases are not considered in this paper.

## METHODOLOGY

To quantitatively monitor the trend in decision-making by the WH Committee, AB recommendations and WH Committee decisions on nominations are first allocated a numerical step value as follows:

Numerical equivalencies	
Decision	Step Value
Inscription	1
Referral	2
Deferral	3
Non-inscription	4

Hence, when an AB recommends deferral for a particular nomination, this is given a step value of 3 in the analysis. The WH Committee's decision for the same nomination is given its equivalent step value. For mixed properties, the step value of the AB recommendation is taken as the average between the recommendations of ICOMOS and IUCN (e.g. a Referral (value = 2) from one AB, and a Deferral (value = 3) from another, will result in a step value of 2.5). If either of the ABs recommend inscription of the site, then that site is treated as other sites recommended for inscription and not considered in this study. These step values are attributed for all nomination decisions during a WH Committee meeting, resulting in a table such as the one for the WH Committee meeting in 2010.

**Table 1.** WH nomination decisions and AB recommendations for WH COM34 in 2010

Property ID	Name	Country	AB Recommendation	WH COM Decision
1335	China Danxia	China	D 3	I 1
1325	Phoenix Islands	Kiribati	D 3	I 1
1252	Tajik National Park	Tajikistan	D 3	D 3
1203	Sri Lanka Central Highlands	Sri Lanka	R-D 2.5	I 1
1204 rev	Dinosaur Ichnites	Spain / Portugal	N 4	D 3
1306	Convict Sites	Australia	R 2	I 1
1344	Wallonia Mining Sites	Belgium	D 3	D 3
1333	Konso	Ethiopia	D 3	R 2
1338	Janta Mantar	India	R 2	I 1
1295	Fort Jesus	Kenya	D 3	R 2
1352	Caves of Oaxaca	Mexico	R 2	I 1
1324	Korean Villages	Republic of Korea	R 2	I 1
1329	At Turaif, Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	D 3	I 1
1313 rev	Mercury and Silver	Spain / Mexico / Slovenia	D 3	D 3
1247	Darwin's House	UK	N 4	D 3
1328	Thang Long Citadel	Viet Nam	D 3	I 1

AB recommendations and WH decisions and associated step values

I = Inscribe (1), R = Refer (2), D = Defer (3), N = Not inscribe (4)

Once attributed a numerical value, the degree of concordance between the AB recommendation and the WH Committee decision can also be quantified (the step increase). Simply, the step increase is the numerical difference between the AB recommendation value and that of the WH Committee's decision. For example, an AB recommendation for Deferral (value = 3) and a WH Committee decision to inscribe (value = 1) results in a step increase of (3 - 1). The larger the step increase, the lesser the concordance. Table 2 presents the step increase calculation for the COM 34 session in 2010.

**Table 2.** Step increases for WH Committee decisions

Property ID	Name	Country	AB Recommendation		WH COM Decision		Step Increase
1335	China Danxia	China	D	3	I	1	2
1325	Phoenix Islands	Kiribati	D	3	I	1	2
1252	Tajik National Park	Tajikistan	D	3	D	3	0
1203	Sri Lanka Central Highlands	Sri Lanka	R-D	2.5	I	1	1.5
1204 rev	Dinosaur Ichnites	Spain / Portugal	N	4	D	3	1
1306	Convict Sites	Australia	R	2	I	1	1
1344	Wallonia Mining Sites	Belgium	D	3	D	3	0
1333	Konso	Ethiopia	D	3	R	2	1
1338	Janta Mantar	India	R	2	I	1	1
1295	Fort Jesus	Kenya	D	3	R	2	1
1352	Caves of Oaxaca	Mexico	R	2	I	1	1
1324	Korean Villages	Republic of Korea	R	2	I	1	1
1329	At Turaif, Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	D	3	I	1	2
1313 rev	Mercury and Silver	Spain / Mexico / Slovenia	D	3	D	3	0
1247	Darwin's House	UK	N	4	D	3	1
1328	Thang Long Citadel	Viet Nam	D	3	I	1	2

**Average Step Increase (Av SI)**

With this information, the quantitative analysis can now be carried out (Table 3). The sum of the step increase values (17.5 in the example below) is divided by the total number of nomination decisions taken, for an average step increase given by the committee.

**Table 3.** Average Step Increase Calculation

Property ID	Name	Country	AB Recommendation		WH COM Decision		Step Increase
1335	China Danxia	China	D	3	I	1	2
1325	Phoenix Islands	Kiribati	D	3	I	1	2
1252	Tajik National Park	Tajikistan	D	3	D	3	0
1203	Sri Lanka Central Highlands	Sri Lanka	R-D	2.5	I	1	1.5
1204 rev	Dinosaur Ichnites	Spain / Portugal	N	4	D	3	1
1306	Convict Sites	Australia	R	2	I	1	1
1344	Wallonia Mining Sites	Belgium	D	3	D	3	0
1333	Konso	Ethiopia	D	3	R	2	1
1338	Janta Mantar	India	R	2	I	1	1
1295	Fort Jesus	Kenya	D	3	R	2	1
1352	Caves of Oaxaca	Mexico	R	2	I	1	1
1324	Korean Villages	Republic of Korea	R	2	I	1	1
1329	At Turaif, Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	D	3	I	1	2
1313 rev	Mercury and Silver	Spain / Mexico / Slovenia	D	3	D	3	0
1247	Darwin's House	UK	N	4	D	3	1
1328	Thang Long Citadel	Viet Nam	D	3	I	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>45.5</b>		<b>28</b>		<b>17.5</b>

In this case, 16 nominations for which the advisory bodies did not recommend inscription were considered. The average step increase given by the WH Committee for nominations in 2010 is:  $17.5 / 16 = 1.09$ . This value is roughly equivalent to a systematic 'upgrade' of one step on all AB nomination recommendations (not including 'inscription') in 2010.

### Maximum Possible Average Step Increase (Max SI)

Given that the margin for ‘upgrading’ by the WH Committee may vary from year to year, depending on the quality of nominations and the recommendations from ABs, the average step increase for a particular WH Committee meeting cannot be meaningfully compared from meeting to meeting. For instance, in one meeting the ABs may recommend all sites for referral, giving the WH Committee only the possibility of a step increase of 1 (e.g. referral to inscription). In another meeting, the ABs may recommend non-inscription for all nominations, giving the WH Committee the opportunity for greater step increases of up to 3 (non-inscription being attributed a value of 4, and inscription having a value of 1;  $4 - 1 = 3$ ).

By calculating the maximum possible average step increase (Max SI) for a particular WH Committee meeting, and comparing the actual average step increase given by the WH Committee at that meeting, one can better compare the extent to which WH Committee decisions have diverged from the AB recommendations between WH Committee meetings.

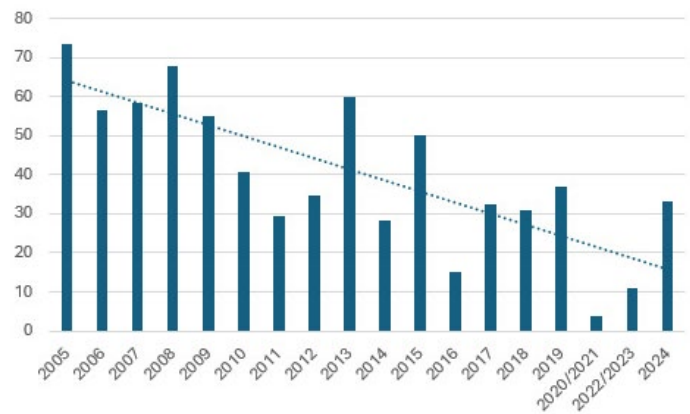
The Max SI is calculated by attributing the greatest possible step increase for each decision, and dividing the sum of these values by the number of nomination decisions subjected to the analysis. The greatest possible step increases occur when the WH Committee decides to inscribe a property. As inscription receives a quantitative value of ‘1’. In such circumstances, the maximum possible step increase when the AB recommends non-inscription, is 3 ( $4 - 1$ ), deferral is 2 ( $3 - 1$ ) and referral is 1 ( $2 - 1$ ).

In the tables above, the WH COM decisions column illustrates the variation in decisions made by the Committee. This column adds up to a total of 28. The maximum divergence from the AB recommendations would have occurred should the Committee have decided to inscribe all sites. In such a case, the WH Committee decision column would have added up to only 16 (the value of Inscription is 1, and there are 16 nominations being considered).

Thus, calculating the Max SI is as follows:  $(45.5 - 16) / 16 = 1.84$  for WH COM 34 (2010).

### Concordance Factor

With the Max SI, one can now calculate the Concordance Factor (CF). The CF is a standardised measure of the extent to which the WH Committee has moved away from having validated all of the AB recommendations, to having inscribed all nominations. A CF of 0% implies inscription of all nominations, whereas a 100% concordance implies validation of all AB recommendations.



**Figure 1.** Concordance Factor for WH Committee decisions, 2005–2024. Dotted line = linear trend line

The CF, expressed as a percentage, is calculated as follows:

$$CF = [1 - (Av SI/Max Si)] \times 100$$

Thus a CF of 100 indicates complete alignment between AB advice and WH Committee decisions and a CF of 0 indicates maximum divergence.

## RESULTS

The Concordance Factor for each of the WH Committee meetings from 2005 (WH COM 28) to 2024 (WH COM 41) is presented in Figure 1.

The 20-year average is 42% and the trend is decidedly away from increased concordance.

## DISCUSSION

Based on a quantitative assessment of the divergence of WH Committee decisions from ABs’ recommendations relating to WH nominations, the anecdotal evidence is clearly corroborated. There is no longer any doubt over the reduced concordance between AB recommendations and WH Committee decisions. In fact, this decline in alignment is not limited to site nominations but extends to other areas, such as State of Conservation reports and the listing of sites as WH in Danger, although these fall outside the scope of this paper (see Hølleland et al., 2019; Meskill, 2014).

### Reasons for reduced concordance

Several scholars have identified the increasing ‘politicisation’ of the selection process by States Parties as a key factor leading to this reduced concordance between ABs’ recommendations and WH Committee decisions. Critics argue that the WH List is increasingly shaped by political influence and national strategic interests rather than objective criteria (Bertacchini et al., 2016). The growing dominance of career diplomats, instead of heritage experts, within the WH Committee has further shifted the decision-making towards political



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trade-offs, undermining professional judgement (von Droste, 2011). In some instances, WH designations have become political tools for advancing sovereign interests, with national self-interests driving more and more openly-conducted bilateral lobbying and deal-making (Brumann, 2022). This trend has raised concerns that heritage conservation demands, technical expertise and objective standards are being disregarded in favour of political considerations (Brumann & Gfeller, 2021; Hølleland et al., 2019; James, 2016; James & Winter, 2015; Liuzza, 2021).

Moreover, decision-making within the WH Committee has shifted towards greater multipolarity, reflecting broader geopolitical dynamics (Wade, 2011). As interest in WH grows, so does participation in Committee sessions. Attendance in each Committee session, which rarely exceeded 100 participants before 1992, reached 500 in 2000, and surged to nearly 2,900 by 2024 (including 1,400 delegates from 136 States Parties in the 46th Session). This increase in participation, coupled with the growing complexity of site evaluations, has placed more pressure on the decision-making process, where desirable outcomes increasingly outweigh the need to consider technical issues.

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### **Inefficacy of previous solutions**

The systemic issues surrounding the WH Committee's decision-making process were recognised as early as 2010, when Kishore Rao, then Deputy Director of the World Heritage Centre, noted that the Committee's criticism of the ABs highlighted inherent problems within the system (Rao, 2010). By 2012, dissatisfaction among certain States Parties led to proposals for alternative advisory mechanisms, should these tensions continue (Bertacchini et al., 2016). In response, the WH Committee initiated internal reflections, such as the creation of an informal working group in 2014, to address challenges in working methods and nomination evaluation processes (UNESCO, 2014, Decision 38 COM 13, 9).

Efforts to improve the effective use of the Tentative List have also been discussed, with scholars suggesting that it should serve not only as a procedural requirement but also as a strategic tool for assessing the feasibility of proposed nominations (Jokilehto, 2011). Although the Operational Guidelines identify the Tentative List as a prerequisite for submitting new nominations, there has been no formal evaluation of these lists to date.

However, despite past concerns and efforts to address these challenges, the continuing overall decline of the CF indicator value studied in this paper suggests that progress has been elusive. Systemic issues persist, underscoring the need for renewed efforts and innovative strategies. It is imperative to continue refining the nomination and evaluation processes to foster a more inclusive, transparent and effective World Heritage system.

## CONCLUSION

Understanding the reduction in concordance between ABs and the Committee on WH nomination decisions is crucial, as this conflictual situation undermines both the viability and credibility of the WH List. According to the Budapest Declaration adopted in 2002, the '4Cs' — Credibility, Conservation, Capacity-building, and Communication—are essential for the equitable and sustainable implementation of the WH Convention (UNESCO, 2002). Strengthening the credibility of the WH List is widely recognised as a priority to ensure it remains a representative and geographically balanced record of cultural and natural properties of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). However, the disregard for scientific evaluations by the ABs, coupled with the rapid increasing number of WH sites, risks undermining the coherence of the WH List and its unique concept of the OUV, ultimately diminishing its credibility (Zunjic, 2023).

Jokilehto (2011) emphasises the importance of respecting each partner's role in the World Heritage process, warning that disregarding ABs' recommendations without justification risks fostering an environment of arbitrariness. This, in turn, could damage the credibility of the Convention and weaken conservation efforts. 'Over the years, the Committee has always encouraged the Advisory Bodies to be strict in their evaluations. Now, the Advisory Body is punished when making a special effort to do its job correctly.' (Jokilehto, 2011, p. 73). He raises a pertinent question: whether it is really in the interest of the States Parties to insist on inscriptions when ABs have determined that requirements are not yet adequately met?

To address these challenges, it is crucial to systematically monitor the Concordance Factor between the WH Committee and ABs. This will transform anecdotal assumptions into documented evidence and provide a basis for evaluating measures aimed at reversing the trend. The quantitative methodology presented in this paper offers a rigorous and replicable tool for assessing recent trends, offering a foundation for future research and policy discussions aimed at safeguarding the credibility of the World Heritage List.

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## RESUMEN

La Convención del Patrimonio Mundial de la UNESCO (1972) es un importante instrumento internacional para la protección del patrimonio cultural y natural, con implicaciones diplomáticas, económicas y académicas de gran alcance. Sin embargo, se han dirigido cada vez más críticas a los procesos de toma de decisiones del Comité del Patrimonio Mundial, en particular a su creciente tendencia a ignorar las recomendaciones de sus órganos consultivos. Hasta ahora, estas críticas han sido en gran medida anecdóticas, basadas en observaciones no documentadas y carentes de pruebas cuantitativas. Este documento aborda esta laguna proponiendo una metodología cuantitativa para medir las tendencias en el nivel de concordancia entre las recomendaciones de los órganos consultivos y las decisiones del Comité del Patrimonio Mundial. El estudio introduce métricas como los valores de los pasos, los incrementos de los pasos y el factor de concordancia para evaluar el grado de concordancia entre las recomendaciones de los órganos consultivos y las decisiones del Comité del Patrimonio Mundial entre 2005 y 2024. Los resultados revelan una disminución constante en la alineación, con un promedio del factor de concordancia en el rango del 60 % a mediados de la década de 2000 y un rango del 25 % para las decisiones más recientes del comité. Esto refleja la creciente tendencia del Comité del Patrimonio Mundial a inscribir, a pesar de las recomendaciones de los órganos consultivos de aplazamiento, remisión o incluso no inscripción. Tales decisiones socavan la credibilidad del sistema del Patrimonio Mundial, con el riesgo de diluir el Valor Universal Excepcional, una protección inadecuada de los sitios y desafíos de gestión a largo plazo.

## RÉSUMÉ

La Convention du patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO (1972) est un instrument international important pour la protection du patrimoine culturel et naturel, avec des implications diplomatiques, économiques et académiques de grande portée. Cependant, les processus décisionnels du Comité du patrimoine mondial ont fait l'objet de critiques croissantes, notamment en ce qui concerne sa tendance à ne pas tenir compte des recommandations de ses organisations consultatives. Jusqu'à présent, ces critiques étaient largement anecdotiques, basées sur des observations non documentées et manquant de preuves quantitatives. Cet article comble cette lacune en proposant une méthodologie quantitative pour mesurer les tendances du niveau de concordance entre les recommandations des organisations consultatives et les décisions du Comité du patrimoine mondial. L'étude introduit des mesures telles que les valeurs d'étape, les augmentations d'étape et le facteur de concordance pour évaluer le degré de concordance entre les recommandations de l'organe consultatif et les décisions du Comité du patrimoine mondial entre 2005 et 2024. Les résultats révèlent un déclin constant de la concordance, le facteur de concordance se situant en moyenne autour de 60 % au milieu des années 2000 et autour de 25 % pour les décisions plus récentes du Comité. Cela reflète la tendance croissante du Comité du patrimoine mondial à inscrire des biens en dépit des recommandations de l'organisation consultative en faveur d'un report, d'un renvoi ou même d'une non-inscription. De telles décisions nuisent à la crédibilité du système du patrimoine mondial et risquent d'entraîner une dilution de la valeur universelle exceptionnelle, une protection inadéquate des sites et des problèmes de gestion à long terme.